

Fightback

Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

THE **INTERNATIONALISM** ISSUE

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Contents

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Fightback magazine is now in its 20th year as we continue the long-term fight for socialism. Readers and supporters may consider remembering us in their will with assets or money that will help the struggle in the long-term. If this is you please put in your will 'Fightback, PO Box 10-282, Dominion Road, Auckland 1446 as well as what you would like to leave to us.

Editorial

For our fourth magazine issue of 2015, Fightback is publishing an international-themed issue. This includes a number of reprints from international sources, as well as original content. As we go to print, images of dead Syrian refugees have prompted international outcry, with some concessions won already – the New Zealand government recently announced plans to let 100 more refugees in. Fightback supports international working-class solidarity, including open borders and full rights for migrant workers.

What do we mean when we say 'international'? Is it the same thing as global, or worldwide? Internationalism implies the existence of 'nations.' Nation-states, borders, in the sense we know them have only existed for a relatively short period of human history.

Contemporary nation-states are a product of the emergence, and global expansion, of capitalism. Expansion, of course, meant bloody colonisation – although the same violent alienation of land that would later be inflicted on indigenous peoples was first inflicted on European peasants.

With the colonisation of the US in particular, the 'colour line' was drawn between white and black workers, a conscious attempt to undermine working-class unity. White workers received a "psychological wage," in African-American theorist W.E.B. Dubois' words; limited privileges in exchange for supporting the regime that exploited them.

Modern racism is therefore deeply connected to the global expansion of capitalism. Unfortunately, this has also run through 'left' and social-democratic politics; the NZ Labour Party supported the White New Zealand policy in the early 20th Century.

When we speak of internationalism, or international workers' solidarity, it's a struggle on multiple fronts. It's a struggle against imperialism, an international military, economic and political system; a struggle against 'free trade' agreements like the TPPA and military occupations; for the self-determination of communities. It's a struggle against the global hierarchy, with a minority of mainly white billionaires on one pole, and the global majority on the opposite pole.

Many are somewhere in the middle, particularly in a nation like Aotearoa / New Zealand, a nation-state that tends to stand with the imperialist 'Anglosphere' – Britain, the US, Australia. 85% of this country identifies as 'middle-class.' Those of us in the middle must pick a side.

The forces stacked against us are immense, as Greece's Syriza has demonstrated (see Greek Crisis, 3. P10-11). The fight will not be easy or quick. It will have to come from many places, many worldviews, but it will also require strategy – we can't underestimate our enemies. Fightback hopes that this magazine issue will provide solace and assistance for our side.

About Fightback

Under our current system, democracy consists of a vote every 3 years. Most of our lives are lived under dictatorship, the dictatorship of bosses and WINZ case managers. Fightback stands for a system in which our workplaces, our schools, our universities are run democratically, for social need rather than private profit.

Fightback participates in the MANA Movement, whose stated mission is to bring "rangatiratanga to the poor, the powerless and the dispossessed." Capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa through colonisation, and the fight for indigenous self-determination is intimately connected with the fight for an egalitarian society. We also maintain an independent Marxist organisation outside of parliament, to offer a vision of a world beyond the parliamentary capitalist system.

Fightback stands against all forms of oppression. We believe working-class power, the struggle of the majority for self-determination, is the basis for ending all forms of oppression. However, we also recognise that daily inequities such as sexism must be addressed here and now, not just after the revolution.

Fightback is embedded in a range of struggles on the ground; including building a fighting trade union movement, movements for gender and sexual liberation, and anti-racism.

Fightback also publishes a monthly magazine, and a website, to offer a socialist perspective on ongoing struggles.

Fightback stands for struggle, solidarity and socialism.

Fightback

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The Memory Wars



Guest article by Val Morse (Peace Action Wellington).

In George Orwell's novel *1984*, the Ministry of Truth is responsible for the continual updating of historical records so that they always accord with the official party line. Original documents are incinerated in a "memory hole" and disgraced people are "unpersoned," all traces of them erased. A state of perpetual war exists, and the enemy is being constantly redefined.

I've been thinking a lot about remembering and forgetting in terms of war and trauma. I've been thinking

about it because New Zealand has gone back to war in Iraq, and I feel so full of anger with the memory of all that has happened there for the past 14 years alive in my mind. And I feel full of rage at the deliberate forgetting that is going on now.

I think it is easy to forget about the horror of war, about bodies being ripped apart by the millions, about the torture, about the summary executions, the nighttime raids, the drone strikes. It's easy to forget the transparent power grabs and the blatant lies. It is easy, not because we willfully try to forget, but rather, because our forgetting serves power.

Power needs us to forget. It needs us to forget in order that we will consent to do it again. It simply needs to erase enough of the truth and enough of the horror, enough of the time, to make the desired course of action tenable in the minds of many, if not most, people.

This is the point at which we have arrived. New Zealand has now been in a state of perpetual war for 14 years. It started on 8 October 2001 when NZ joined *Operation Enduring Freedom*, and it has never stopped.

For 14 years, New Zealand has been fighting illegitimate wars of aggression

in the Middle East and Central Asia resulting in the deaths of millions of people. It has committed grave human rights violations and has contributed to the massive destabilisation of the entire region that may ultimately engulf the entire world. It has done so for empire, for the continued triumphal march of western neo-liberal capitalism across the globe.

But lest we imagine that this war is simply about money, let us consider a comment from Edward Said's *Orientalism*:

"...without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand that enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, socially, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively...European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self." (2003, p3)

Waging this war is not simply about economic exploitation of the Middle East (defined as part of the Orient by Said), but rather about a very long project of European (and later American) empire to own, by way of produced knowledge, the very idea of what that place is and who those people are. It is the "other" against which the West is measured and understood. The "war on terrorism" should, then, also be understood as part of a continual exercise in re/establishing cultural superiority and promulgating white supremacy.

Lest we forget – or rather, lest some remember, New Zealand has been a regular contributor to this discourse of Orientalism for 100 years. Its invasions of the lands of Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran in the First World War produced enduring constructions of 'the Turk,' 'the Gippo' and the 'nigger.'

The memory machine that geared up in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing (and will continue for another 4 years) does not prefer

that we remember the racism, both institutional and individual, that was a daily, intimate part of New Zealand life. Nor is power served by too many people thinking too much about the boots of New Zealand soldiers tramping through the same lands as "our" soldiers from 100 years ago did for much the same reasons. This is most certainly why the Prime Minister pulled back from his childish suggestion of deploying an "Anzac-badged" unit, caught up as he must have been in some deluded poppy-induced patriotic fervor, and instead, remembered that he was trying to make us all forget.

In one way, forgetting the reality of war is a good idea. It is good for the actual people who fought the battles, or who lost their friends, families, communities, and livelihoods. When I contemplate the extreme trauma that bearing witness to the execution of your family might entail, I imagine that some forgetting might well be necessary to enduring the crushing weight of the pain. How can a person go on living knowing that everyone they ever loved was brutally murdered? Similarly, it would seem that to some extent, those who are doing the murdering might also need to do a bit of forgetting – the First World War was where the first experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder were recorded. Young men, if they survived the trenches, were destroyed human beings haunted by memories of piles of bodies and body parts everywhere, the stench of rotting flesh and explosions all around them. Today, thousands of returned soldiers wander the streets in the United States, homeless and suffering from deep psychological disorders as a result of war; they are expected to return to "normal life" after years of combat.

One of my favourite quotes is a line from Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." I think it says a lot about what the role of the radical left should be in this age of perpetual war. I think that the left can and should be

remembering. We should remember George Bush and Tony Blair's lies. We should remember Fallujah. We should remember Abu Ghraib. We should remember Guantanamo. We should remember Band-E-Timur. We should remember Labour's deployment of NZSAS for "long range reconnaissance and direct action missions" in Afghanistan. We should remember NZ's special trade status for joining the 2003 occupation of Iraq. We should remember Ahmed Zaoui. We should remember Daryl Jones. We should remember war is peacekeeping. We should remember the horror. We should remember the dead.

We should also remember our history – a history of resistance – to this perpetual war. We should remember February 15, 2003 when we joined the world to march against war. We should remember picketing the Labour Party and calling its war supporters "Scabs." We should remember the "Citizens' Weapons Inspection" of the US embassy. We should remember Father Peter Murnane pouring blood on the carpet of the US ambassador. We should remember hounding Australian prime minister John Howard as he toured Wellington. We should remember burning the flags of empires. We should remember shutting down the weapons conference. We should remember the Ploughshares popping the Waihopai spy dome. We should remember Chelsea Manning. We should remember the dreams of peace with justice and self-determination for all of the world's people.

For if we ever hope to escape this Ministry of Truth – the so-called "war on terrorism" – we must wage a ceaseless war on forgetting.



A year after Gaza attack, the world must stop supporting Israel's crimes

Reprinted from *Electronic Intifada*.

Shahd Abusalama, 23, is a Palestinian artist, a blogger from Gaza, currently working on her MA in Media and the Middle East at University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Being a daughter of a former Palestinian prisoner has been the primary source of inspiration for her work fighting injustice through her drawings and writings. She blogs at [Palestine From my Eyes](http://palestinefrommyeyes.com), and she can always be followed at [@shahdabusalama](https://twitter.com/shahdabusalama).

I can almost hear my dad's voice breaking in tears and echoing in my ears when I called him on 13 August 2014 following the murder of our neighbor Hazem Abu Murad.

Hazem grew up next door to our home, and was like a son to my Dad and his best companion whenever he sat at the front door of our home. Along with five others, Hazem was killed while trying to diffuse an unexploded 500 kilogram Israeli missile in Beit Lahya.

I can still recall the unspeakable shock that my family suffered on the first day of Eid al-Fitr over the loss of my uncle Muhammed Abu Louz who was killed, leaving behind a very young widow with a 2-year old son and 3-year-old daughter. The children were too young to comprehend what

was going on around them. They were dressed in new clothes for Eid and constantly asking when their father would be back to give them candies and gifts.

I can almost hear my mum's shaky voice on the phone saying whenever I called, "We're okay, thank God. Don't worry." Continuous bombing rumbled in the background, almost every second. Sometimes, right after I heard the terrifying sounds of explosions, the call disconnected. That would drive me mad as dark thoughts about death, destruction and loss filled my mind. I would endlessly try to call back as panic overcame me.

Only when I heard their voices again could I calm down and breathe, or at least sigh as attempts to keep myself together failed. During those traumatic times, sleep was the last thing on my mind. If I slept, I dozed unintentionally on my computer or my sofa. But I woke from these accidental naps terrified, almost out of breath, thinking that anything could have happened while I slept. I would run to call my family, and could only relax once someone answered the phone. I would break into tears that were a mixture of conflicting emotions: fear, trauma and happiness. Their voices on the phone indicated they were still alive, or not dead yet.

These fears filled me for 51 days and nights, but intensified more as the war grew crazier, more brutal, then beyond brutal. My days and nights merged so I no longer kept track

of time. It became meaningless. Food lost its taste. Even rest, though I was exhausted, became undesirable. I spent 51 days in isolation, sitting in front of my computer and phone, watching the Lebanese channel al-Mayadeen's coverage, and at the same time listening to Palestinian radio channels like al-Quds, al-Aqsa and al-Shaab online.

Anger

To keep my sanity, I wrote on social media, sometimes filling my sketchbook with black and white, or marching through Istanbul's streets with a group of Palestinians to express our anger. We chanted as loudly as we could for justice and holding Israel accountable for its crimes, for stopping the attack on Gaza and the bloodshed. Looking outside my window in Istanbul used to feel like a slap in the face as I saw typical, ordinary days, as if nothing was happening in Palestine and no one was dying almost every moment.

At times, I felt that even though I was privileged to study outside the Gaza

us. I knew what it was like, and that was what made me go mad. We had survived many attacks, but that did not mean we would survive all of them.

The last Gaza massacre was beyond brutal. The Israeli occupation crossed all red lines with its immoral and inhumane measures. Neighborhoods were completely destroyed. Families were wiped out, with not even one member surviving to pass on the stories and ambitions of those who were murdered. But the international mainstream media had reduced this devastating cost that the Palestinian people endured into numbers in its headlines or even between the lines.

One year later

A year has passed since the ceasefire was declared. But Palestinians civilians died in front of the whole world as Western powers parroted their commitment to Israel's "right to self-defense."

Meanwhile the death toll rose higher and higher. Self-defense against whom?

fighting in a "conflict." Ours are a people calling for legitimate rights, rejecting brutal living conditions that resemble a slow death sentence under a suffocating siege, and resisting oppression that has lasted 67 years by a colonial power that treats them as less than human and continues to deny their most basic rights while attacking their very existence, identity, culture and history.

A year has passed and the piles of rubble remain as cruel reminders of all our people endured during the 51-day onslaught, its devastating aftermath and how little progress has been made since then. Reconstruction has barely begun. Thousands still live in makeshift shelters, leading a life of uncertainty and struggling daily for survival. I am sure every Palestinian, especially those from Gaza, is still traumatized. What we survived during the summer of 2014 will take a lifetime to heal. It will always remain like a scar on our psyche until justice for the victims who died is achieved, and the freedom for which we paid this huge price is gained, until Israel is held accountable, denormalized and treated for what it is in reality: a settler-colonial state.

But not only Israel is responsible for what our people have endured. It is a responsibility shared by the whole international community, who give Israel a green light to cross all red lines. Israel's impunity is fortified by the silence of a world that not only watches silently, but is proactive in its unconditional support for Israel's crimes. International solidarity with Palestine has to move beyond mere sentiment to serious political actions that fight the policies of governments who support Israel and all it does.

Do not allow your governments to continue their support of Israel in your name! Have your say! Boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) is a tactic that is growing all over the world and effectively threatening Israel. Empower it more wherever you are and help spread the voice of justice. And always remember that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.



ghetto, where the lives of everyone, regardless of age or gender, were threatened by the Zionist murder machine, it was harder to bear than the times I was there, experiencing attacks first hand. But I think that was because I had been there when death was everywhere and bombings surrounded

Numbers themselves tell the whole story clearly. More than 2,200 Palestinians, most of them civilians, were killed in Gaza, and more than 100,000 buildings were totally destroyed, while 73 Israelis, nearly all soldiers, died. This is an occupation against the occupied, not equal armies

Germany:

Movements in the Heart of the Beast

Guest article by JoJo, a Fightback correspondent based in Germany.

In the last few months the development of the left in Greece has been watched with interest by leftists all over the world. The austerity policies against which the Syriza government and social movements tried to fight were imposed on Greece by the other countries of the Eurozone, led by Germany, the imperialist heart of Europe. The economy in Germany is relatively healthy; Germany has emerged as a winner of the crisis, while its government's policies are worsening the crisis in southern Europe. The majority of the population follows a nationalist consensus and supports their government. In this article, I will take a look at the left movement in Germany fighting under these circumstances.

The new social movements that arose from the student rebellion of 1968 led to many new leftist organisations and activists. Some of them were the so-called "K-groups", orthodox Communist groups who were often sectarian. In the 1980s activists who criticised these hierarchical structures formed the autonomous movement, which is made up of small local groups and projects such as squats and social centres, rather than big organisations. In the early 1990s the rise of nationalism and neo-Nazism which accompanied the so-called 'reunification' of East Germany by the West made anti-fascism the main issue for the autonomous left.

Recently, formerly autonomous groups have begun to confederate into nationwide (or bigger, including groups from Austria) networks or organisations, which could be called post-autonomous.

One problem with the autonomous groups was that their informal structures were often opaque, incapable of learning and inadequately organised, while informal hierarchies continued to exist. Meanwhile, the social question became more important with the neoliberal reforms of the welfare system carried out by the Social-Democratic/Green coalition government in the beginning of the 2000s, and now with the economic crisis and austerity. This showed that to focus only on anti-fascism is not enough. Major antifascist groups broke up, with sections joining post-autonomous organisations like the Interventionist Left.

disobedience. For these mass actions, the IL tries to build broad movements that go beyond the radical left, including groups from civil society such as church groups. They see themselves as the organising and radicalising part of the left.

The IL was formed as a network in 2004, but last year it started a process to form an organisation. This step probably means they will no longer only work as a campaigning network, but also do more theoretical work and act more strategically. They have published a piece that describes the basis for their politics. Nevertheless, they do not dogmatically follow one theoretical school.



The Interventionist Left is probably the biggest of these post-autonomous organisations. It is very active in social movements and mainly focuses on mass mobilisations for actions of civil

The IL describes itself as antagonist towards the state, however in comparison with other organisations of the radical left it has often been seen as



the one that still works closest together with the party DIE LINKE, a left-wing reformist party with some anti-capitalist factions in it.

Another important network that could be described as post-autonomous is the anti-authoritarian communist alliance "...ums Ganze!" (UG - "Everything is at stake!"). It was founded 2006 to make a radical critique of capitalism and oppression visible on an supraregional level. In the beginning, they focused a lot on theory and on criticising mass mobilisations of the left that did not push forward a radical critique, such as the 2007 mobilisations against the G8. However, in recent years they have done more and more work within movements (such as Blockupy), trying to make their critique visible within those. UG has a strong focus on anti-nationalism and is more critical of political parties than the IL. On a European level, they are organised in the platform "Beyond Europe" together with anarchist and anti-authoritarian communist groups from other countries, such as Alpha Kappa (Anti-authoritarian Movement) from Greece.

The "New Anticapitalist Organisation" (NaO) is another organisation of the radical left that is currently being formed. Many groups that are confederating into the NaO do not come from autonomous traditions, but from Trotskyism. However, recently "Antifascist Revolutionary Action Berlin" (ARAB) joined the NaO, so that it is now a merger of post-Trotskyist and post-autonomous organisations. The ARAB played a big role in the left scene in Berlin, for example in organising the Mayday demonstrations. The NaO is still quite new and therefore not that visible and active yet, even though they had a

successful campaign to raise funds for the YPG and YPJ, Kurdish self-defence forces fighting Daesh aka ISIS in Rojava (Western Kurdistan/Northern Syria).

The IL and UG are both active in the Blockupy alliance that organises annual Days of Action in solidarity with the population of Greece and other countries that bear the brunt of austerity policies. So far the Days of Action have mainly taken place in Frankfurt, where the European Central Bank, a part of the Troika that imposes austerity, has its headquarters. Blockupy is a broad alliance with all parts of the left represented. It connects the struggle against austerity in tandem with other struggles, such as against gentrification or supporting feminist or refugee struggles. The Days of Action usually involve blockades of the ECB, decentralised blockade actions against other targets and demonstrations. A climax of the mobilisation was the Day of Action on March 18 this year against the opening of the ECB's new building. The protests were accompanied by riots, triggering a debate about militancy as some spokespeople of the alliance criticised the militant actions.

It was feared that this debate might destroy the Blockupy alliance. This has been proven wrong, as shown by the many actions organised by Blockupy since March 18. They took part in the demonstration "Remake.Europe" on 20 June in Berlin, and organised demonstrations to show solidarity during the referendum in Greece. Delegates from Blockupy also travelled to Athens during the referendum and the events that followed, and wrote about their experiences and political thoughts on a blog. In October, Blockupy will join

the protests against the EU summit in Brussels and for next spring they plan Days of Action in Berlin.

The state of the left in Greece and the role of Syriza, as well as the question of staying in the Eurozone or not, are also debated in the German left. However, these debates might not be that important in Germany, because we should focus on fighting our government. The capitulation of Syriza is also a failure of the left in Germany, which didn't succeed in questioning the status quo enough and thus allowed the German government the confidence to force Syriza into capitulation. Someone who had asked activists in Greece how Germans could support them told me that they replied: "Do something against Merkel!".

So this will be the challenge for the left in the next couple of years. For this, it is great that Blockupy keeps working and that they move the focus of their actions to Berlin. It is also useful that we have big radical leftist organisations and networks that can fight for an anti-capitalist perspective. These organisations do not replace all autonomous structures, in my opinion. It is still important to have local autonomous groups that can bring new dynamics into the left or that can focus on local struggles such as fighting neo-Nazis in their neighbourhood. We need a diverse movement in order to be strong. When autonomous and post-autonomous groups and other factions of the left join forces and unite different struggles from anti-gentrification to train driver's strikes and from feminism to refugee's protests, we might have a chance of changing the power structures of Europe one day. It is necessary.



Greek Crisis: SYRIZA's dead-end

By Daphne Lawless (*Fightback Aotearoa / New Zealand*), August 21 2015.

Greece's sovereign debt crisis – in effect, the country's bankruptcy at the hands of the European Central Bank and the German-led power bloc in the European Union – turned that country's politics upside down. The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) rocketed from 5% of the vote in 2012 to forming a government in the elections of January this year. As recently as June, a whopping 61% of voters in a referendum rejected the demands of the "troika" (EU and International Monetary Fund lenders) for massive cuts in spending and tax rises to pay the Greek debt. Many foreign leftists saw this as reason for hope – that it was possible for an angry popular movement to take on the forces of neoliberalism, and win.

And yet, all that optimism seems to have evaporated. SYRIZA's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras resigned on August 20th and called for new elections, after signing an agreement for a bailout with the troika in some ways worse

than what the referendum rejected. His popular former Finance Minister, Yannis Varoufakis, is one of many SYRIZA MPs who broke ranks with the Government in the Greek Parliament, depriving it of a majority.

The amazing thing is – as Dick Nichols reports in *Green Left Weekly* – that this barely put a dent in the SYRIZA-led government's popularity, meaning it may be re-elected:

The July 24 Bridging Europe poll put support for SYRIZA at 41.2%, up from the 36.3% it won in January 25. The July 24 Metron Analysis poll reported the same result, while a July 18 Palms poll put support for the radical coalition at 42.5%.

All three polls had support for the conservative opposition New Democracy (ND) falling by between 4.7% and 6.3% to the low 20s.ⁱ

How to explain this contradiction? It helps to look back at what kind of party SYRIZA actually is, and how and why it won the January election.

Eurocommunism

SYRIZA emerged from a split in the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) in the 1960s. The "KKE-Interior", as its name suggests, was led by those Communist leaders who stayed in Greece during the fascist military regime of 1967-1974, rather than fleeing to exile. They saw themselves as part of what was known as the "Eurocommunist" movement. Led by the biggest Western communist parties in France, Spain and Italy, the Eurocommunists refused to pledge allegiance to the Soviet or Chinese power blocs, or to promote the idea of revolution or "dictatorship of the proletariat" (workers' power). Instead, they promoted the idea of working within the structures of Western-style democracy to achieve communist goals of equality and justice. Crucially, the Eurocommunists were in favour of the idea of European unity, although critical of the structures which became the EU.

For decades, the KKE-Interior remained about the same size as the "traditionally" Communist KKE, on about 5% of



the vote. This didn't change after the KKE-Interior founded Synapsimos (the Coalition of the Left, Movements and Ecology) in 1993; or after Synapsimos became the largest part of a newer coalition, SYRIZA, in 2004. SYRIZA, as a broad formation of the left, was pulled in two directions; some sections favoured co-operating with PASOK, the traditional Greek "Labour Party", while others were more interested in work with the Greek social movements which came out of anti-war, anti-spending cuts and anti-capitalist demonstrations. All the while, the KKE were bitterly hostile to the "splitters".

While the traditional trade union and workers' movement in Greece maintained its allegiance to the traditional Left parties – PASOK and KKE – SYRIZA grew by attracting newer layers. British journalist Paul Mason explains:

The party ... captured the allegiance of many young people, whose lives revolve around precarious and low-skill work, and reaching the magical subsistence figure of €400 a month.

[Leader Alexis] Tsipras crafted Syriza from a loose alliance into a party that is the quintessential expression of the values of this broad-left section of the Greek

electorate. All it took was for their natural party, Pasok, to destroy itself.ⁱⁱ

Crisis and cuts

And when the sovereign debt crisis hit in 2010, PASOK did indeed destroy itself. A PASOK-led government joined forces with the conservative New Democracy party in viciously cutting government spending and workers' wages to pay for this crisis caused by government and banker greed.

Stuart Munckton in *Green Left Weekly* describes the process:

Greece's national debt was largely run-up by corrupt, unrepresentative governments in a context where the rich pay little-to-no taxes. For instance, Greece's shipping oligarchs, who control about 16% of the global shipping industry, infamously pay no tax at all.

Greece's debt became an issue in 2009 in the context of the global financial crisis caused by the greed of large banks and financial institutions, leading to the collapse of major US banks and causing global panic.

To shore up Greece's ability to pay its creditors, the Troika offered Greece's

government hundreds of billions in bail-out programs — but at the cost of extreme austerity measures to make Greece's poor and working people bear the brunt of cost-saving measures.

Unsurprisingly, extreme spending cuts drove Greece's economy further into recession, while creating mass suffering on a scale not seen in a First World nation since the Great Depression. The unemployment rate now exceeds 30% (50% for youth) and 20% of those with jobs live under the poverty line. ... child malnutrition rates reached levels not seen since World War II.ⁱⁱⁱ

It is worth emphasising, though, that this is not a question of Greece "going broke" and being foreclosed on by private lenders. Greece's private creditors – the big international bankers – had most of their debt bought out by the EU and the International Monetary Fund. The only thing which stops the EU states writing those debts off, and saving Greece a lot of pain, is that it would set a bad example for the other heavily indebted periphery countries – particularly ones like Spain or Ireland, where radical left parties are threatening in upcoming elections. The defeat and humiliation of Greece is bad for Greece, and bad for economic stability in the Eurozone generally – but it is essential

for the political stability of the neoliberal EU project.

PASOK was punished for its treachery by being reduced from one of the two major parties to a mere 6% of the vote. Meanwhile, the KKE – convinced that they and they alone could successfully lead the movement – offered no alternative to the new forces mobilised by the crisis. In contrast, SYRIZA's appeal to new, unorganised layers had great appeal at a time when the Greek working-class was becoming increasingly disorganised itself. Bue Rübner Hansen in *Jacobin* explains:

Given the high rate of unemployment, the livelihood of many Greeks is extremely contingent and the population is one of the most "disorganized" in Europe. The daily order of wage labor and familiar habits have been destabilized by the crisis. This has both lead to a rise in illegal and irregular activities and economies, and to new forms of self-organization.... Well-known examples are the campaigns of auto-reduction, where people refused to pay the electricity bills through which the government levied a direct tax imposed by the troika; the occupation and workers' self-management of the Vio.me factory; and the many solidarity health clinics.^{iv}

Paul Mason describes SYRIZA activists organising food banks called "Solidarity Clubs" in villages hardest hit by the cuts. He quotes one SYRIZA member: "We go out and help people. When they tell us something, we listen. When they ask for help, we are here. You never see Pasok or New Democracy."

SYRIZA's programme

The programme adopted by SYRIZA in the Greek city of Thessaloniki in 2013 called for such modest reforms as increase the tax-free threshold to 12,000 euros, a large real estate property tax, reinstating the Christmas bonus for pensioners receiving less than 700 euros a month, raising the minimum wage and the unemployment benefit. Nathan Bolton commented on the British website rs21.org.uk:

Even before the election it was noted by some commentators that despite the epithet "far-left" so often attributed to Syriza, these policies were not radical, let alone revolutionary... However as has been widely reported, Syriza repeated its intention to remain in the monetary union and avoid political unilateral decisions. It saw its salvation occurring within the EU, so not only saving itself but the political ideal of European integration with it.^v

This commitment to "Europeanism" should not have surprised anyone who understood the largest bloc in SYRIZA and its origins in the Eurocommunist movement, rather than a commitment to revolutionary rupture. However, a more radical programme was offered at the time from the Left Platform, which held 30% of the seats on SYRIZA's central committee. Left Platform leader Antonis Davanellos argued:

First, the political project of SYRIZA must be supported with a grassroots mobilization of the working class and the popular masses. Second, the radical character of the SYRIZA program should be assured by emphasizing cancellation of most of the debt, nationalization of the banks and reversing the privatization of state enterprises. Finally, the only political alliances for SYRIZA must be found on the left.^{vi}

This last point became important following the January 2015 election when, finding itself just short of an overall majority in Parliament, SYRIZA formed a coalition with the Independent Greeks, a right-wing but anti-austerity party. This coalition made it clear that Tsipras' new government saw itself as governing on behalf of "the nation" as a whole, rather than for the working classes or from the Left. Again, this was foreshadowed by the practice of the Western Eurocommunist parties of the past, including the French Communists participating in a coalition government from 1981-4.

Six months in government

The outcome of six months of SYRIZA-led government, however, has been

disappointing to say the least. The European Central Bank more or less held the Greek government hostage by refusing to provide "liquidity" – that is, cash for everyday spending purposes. This led to tight control on bank withdrawals, to the point where public transport in Athens became free because no-one had any small change. More seriously, vital supplies of medicines which could only be paid for in euros were running out.

As explained above, the deal struck between the Tsipras government and the Troika to accomplish this has been labelled a "capitulation" by most on the Left, including SYRIZA's own Left Platform. Paul Mason mentioned in February that "many people who voted for SYRIZA are privately up in arms over the scale of the retreat", but also argued that most of them "blame Germany first, Europe second and their own government a long, long third," arguing that Tsipras and Varoufakis had done everything that they could. Hence SYRIZA's continued good showing in opinion polls.

Did the Tsipras government do everything that it could? Yes – within the bounds of remaining within the Euro and remaining within the European Union, which is essential to the political project of the SYRIZA majority. While Varoufakis now claims to have had a "Plan B" up his sleeve to start printing Greece's own money as a last resort,^{vii} that was never something that Tsipras was going to allow – or that, according to repeated opinion polls, most Greeks wanted.

But Grexit from the Euro is a clear demand of SYRIZA's Left Platform, which has begun the process of splitting from the government. Dick Nichols reports:

Left Platform leader Panagiotis Lafazanis publicly called on August 13 for the creation of a new movement to satisfy "the people's desire for democracy and social justice".

In a statement called "No to the new bailout — A call for struggle and popular mobilisation throughout the country", Lafazanis and 13 other [SYRIZA MP] signatories called for the "political and social formation of a broad, Panhellenic



movement" and "the creation of struggle committees against the new bail-out, austerity and the county's tutelage."^{viii}

Left Platform leader Costas Lapavistas told *Der Tagesspiegel* in Germany that "the only real opposition in Greece against this ludicrous bail-out is coming from within Syriza."^{ix} However, according to another Left Platform member, Stathis Kouvelakis, several leaders of radical left groups who are not part of SYRIZA have also signed up to the appeal by Lafazanis and the Left Platform MPs. SYRIZA, he says, is "disintegrating with record speed."^x

Traditionally, a Greek government cannot survive if it gets less than 120 votes out of 300 on any bill, and only 118 SYRIZA MPs supported the most recent Parliamentary vote on the bailout.^{xi} Thus, the Left Platform's rebellion has forced Tsipras to call new elections – calling their bluff on whether they will actually stand against the SYRIZA majority. If Tsipras once again leads the largest party after the election, he may form a new government with centre-right parties to exclude the left-wing rebels.

Governments and movements

The dead-end faced by SYRIZA in government is something that all radical leftists have to understand. Governments are only powerful in that they can command the State machinery to do various jobs – but there are thousands of other forces in society, internal or external, who can put pressure on that

machinery to do otherwise. SYRIZA negotiators seem to have believed that their strong democratic mandate would mean something compared to the determination of Germany, the EU institutions, the IMF and many of their allies among Greek capitalism that it would be Greek workers and beneficiaries who would pay for the crisis. They were wrong.

When it comes to this kind of "brute force" politics, direct action by social forces – whether mass demonstrations in the street, workers striking or seizing control of the workplaces, even mutinies in the armies and police – play a much more vital role than all the government policy statements and democratic rhetoric. However, the massive Greek upsurges of 2012 had died down by the time SYRIZA came to be elected. In fact, it could be argued that it was the very defeat of the mass movement which was channelled into the ballot box as the "next best thing".

We might draw parallels with Venezuela, where a left-wing government has co-existed for 17 years with a deeply hostile capitalist class. Although Hugo Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, kept winning election after election, a government elected through capitalist democracy and pledged to follow its "rules" cannot create a social revolution. At best, it can "make space" for worker activism and popular uprisings to create one. But in the final analysis, economic power or even brute force decides, not elections. This is why workers and the oppressed need to build their own institutions of counter-power, as well as challenging in the formal sphere of elections.

i <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/59785>

ii <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/28/greek-people-wrote-history-how-syriza-rose-to-power>

iii <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/58340>

iv <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/02/seven-lessons-syriza-greece-troika/>

v <http://rs21.org.uk/2015/02/21/greek-debt-negotiation-does-this-constitute-a-sell-out/>

vi <http://socialistworker.org/2015/01/14/we-ask-for-solidarity>

vii <http://yanisvaroufakis.eu/2015/07/27/statement-by-yanis-varoufakis-on-the-finmins-plan-b-working-group-the-parallel-payment-system/>

viii <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/59785>

ix <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/in-english/syriza-mps-challenge-tsipras-with-anti-bail-out-programme-we-want-syriza-to-return-to-its-principles/12160710.html>

x <http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2174-the-latest-on-greece-towards-the-political-constitution-of-the-front-of-the-no>

xi <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11803799/Greece-on-verge-of-clinching-new-bail-out-but-lenders-delay-debt-talks-until-October.html>

Presidential Candidate Bernie Sanders:

Sheepdogging for Hillary and the Democrats in 2016

Reprinted from Black Agenda Report (BAR).

By Bruce A. Dixon, managing editor at Black Agenda Report, and a state committee member of the GA [Georgia State] Green Party. He lives and works near Marietta GA and can be reached at bruce.dixon@blackagendareport.com.

Spoiler alert: we have seen the Bernie Sanders show before, and we know exactly how it ends. Bernie has zero likelihood of winning the Democratic nomination for president over Hillary Clinton. Bernie will lose, Hillary will win. When Bernie folds his tent in the summer of 2016, the money, the hopes and prayers, the year of activist zeal that folks put behind Bernie Sanders either vanishes into thin air, or directly benefits the Hillary Clinton campaign.

Don't believe us? Then believe Bernie himself, interviewed by George Stephanopoulos on ABC News "This Week" May 3.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So if you lose in this nomination fight, will you support the Democratic nominee?

SANDERS: Yes. I have in the past.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Not going to run as an independent?

SANDERS: No, absolutely not. I've been very clear about that.

Bernie Sanders is this election's Democratic sheepdog. The sheepdog is a card the Democratic party plays every presidential primary season when there's no White House Democrat running for re-election. The sheepdog is a presidential candidate running ostensibly to the left of the establishment Democrat to whom the billionaires will award the nomination. Sheepdogs are

herders, and the sheepdog candidate is charged with herding activists and voters back into the Democratic fold who might otherwise drift leftward and outside of the Democratic party, either staying home or trying to build something outside the two party box.

1984 and '88 the sheepdog candidate was Jesse Jackson. In '92 it was California governor Jerry Brown. In 2000 and 2004 the designated sheepdog was Al Sharpton, and in 2008 it was Dennis Kucinich. This year it's Vermont senator Bernie Sanders. The function of the sheepdog candidate is to give left activists and voters a reason, however illusory, to believe there's a place of influence for them inside the Democratic party, if and only if the eventual Democratic nominee can win in November.

Despite casting millions of voters for the likes of Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and other sheepdogs, those leftish Democrat voters are always disregarded when Democrats actually win. Bill Clinton gave us NAFTA, a vicious "welfare reform," no peace dividend or push for DC statehood, lowered unemployment but mostly in part time and low-wage jobs, and mass incarceration of black and brown people. President Obama doubled down on bailouts of banksters and General Motors, and immunized them from prosecution but failed to address the most catastrophic fall in black household wealth in history. We got health care for some instead of Medicare for All, the Patriot Act renewed instead of repealed, a race to privatize public education, drone wars and still more mass incarceration of black and brown people. And if President Obama gets his way, we may soon have a global job-destroying wage-lowering NAFTA on steroids, with the TPP and TTIP.

The sheepdog's job is to divert the energy and enthusiasm of activists a year, a year

and a half out from a November election away from building an alternative to the Democratic party, and into his doomed effort. When the sheepdog inevitably folds in the late spring or early summer before a November election, there's no time remaining to win ballot access for alternative parties or candidates, no time to raise money or organize any effective challenge to the two capitalist parties.

At that point, with all the alternatives foreclosed, the narrative shifts to the familiar "lesser of two evils." Every sheepdog candidate surrenders the shreds of his credibility to the Democratic nominee in time for the November election. This is how the Bernie Sanders show ends, as the left-leaning warm-up act for Hillary Clinton.

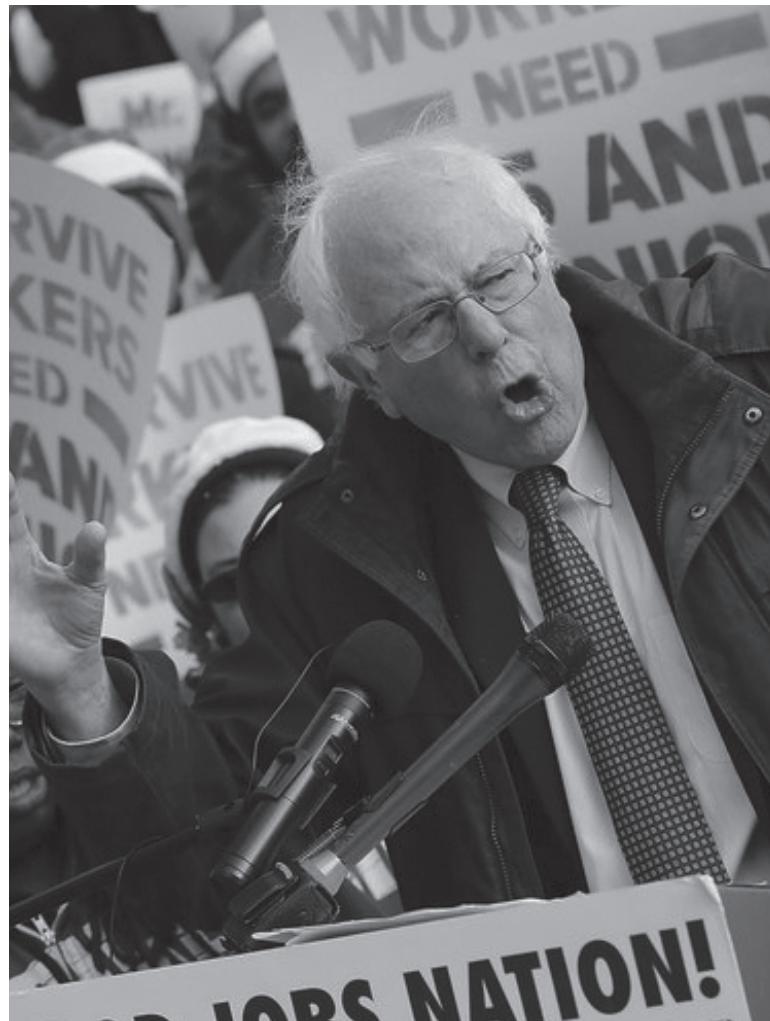
Intent on avoiding the two-party "lesser evil" trap this year, about two hundred activists gathered in Chicago last weekend to consider the future of electoral organizing outside the Democratic and Republican parties. Many of the participants were Greens, including former presidential and vice presidential candidates Jill Stein and Rosa Clemente, the former Green mayor of Richmond, California, and many others. There were also representatives from Seattle, where Socialist Alternative's Kshama Sawant won election to Seattle's city council, as well as Angela Walker, a black socialist who received 67,000 votes for Milwaukee County sheriff in 2014, and many others, including some who took part in the recent Chicago mayoral election.

There was trans-partisan interest in a 50-state ballot access drive to put the Green Party's Jill Stein on the presidential ballot for 2016 presidential race. Currently the law keeps Greens and others off the ballot in more than half the states. Precise details vary

according to state law, but if a third party candidate after obtaining one-time ballot access receives about 2% of total votes, a new ballot line is created, granting ballot access to any potential candidate from school board to sheriff to US congress who wants to run as something other than a Republican or Democrat. That, many participants agreed, would be a significant puncture in the legal thicket that now protects Democrats against competition on the ballot from their left. But a nationwide trans-partisan ballot access campaign to create a national alternative to the two capitalist parties is something left activists must begin serious work a good 18 months before a November election, essentially right now.

Whether or not a national ballot access campaign is undertaken by Greens and others, a Bernie Sanders candidacy is an invitation to do again what's been done in 1984, 1988, 1992, 2000, 2004 and 2008. Bernie's candidacy is a blast toward the past, an invitation to herd and be herded like sheep back into the Democratic fold, to fundraise and canvass and recruit and mobilize for Bernie, as he warms up the crowd for Hillary. Bernie is a sheepdog.

The question is, are we sheep?



Fightback Subscription Appeal 2015

In 2015, Fightback will publish 6 issues of our magazine, plus regular updates on our website, with news, analysis and theory on struggle, solidarity and socialism, in Aotearoa/New Zealand and overseas.

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This year, we need your help to make sure the paper is distributed and printed on time, and the webhosting bills are covered. You can do this by:

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State of the Black Union (Black Lives Matter statement)

The meteoric rise of the Black Lives Matter movement over the past year has made international headlines. This release from January 2015 explains the movement's grievances and demands. Originally printed at blacklivesmatter.com.

Endorsing organizations: Justice League, Millennial Activists United, Black Lives Matter, Trans Women of Color Collective, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Dream Defenders. Black and Brown People Vote, Million Hoodies Movement for Justice, African American Policy Forum, ThinkMoor, Unchained, BYP 100, Freedom Side, Ohio Students Association, Hands Up UNited and the Organization for Black Struggle.

2014 was a year that saw profound injustice, and extraordinary resilience. Homicides at the hands of police sparked massive protests, meaning that America could no longer ignore bitter truths of the Black experience. Gabriella Naverez, a queer Black woman was killed at 22 years old, unarmed. Thirty-seven year old Tanisha Anderson's family dialed 911 for medical

oppression are figments of the Black imagination. The time to address these wounds is now.

Freedom Rider, Diane Nash, once unapologetically declared, "We will not stop. There is only one outcome." Black lives – men and women, queer and trans, immigrant and first-generation – will be valued, protected, and free.

In the face of the tragic killing of Mike Brown, Black youth in Ferguson said no more, sparking resistance against state violence that spread across the nation. For over 160 days we have been marching, shutting down streets, stopping trains and occupying police stations in pursuit of justice. We have stood united in demanding a new system of policing and a vision for Black lives, lived fully and with dignity. Gains have been made, but we who believe in freedom know we cannot rest until justice is won.

The current state of Black America is anything but just. For Black people in the U.S., the shadow of crisis has not passed.

- The median wealth for single White women is \$42,600. For Black women, it's \$5,001.



assistance. Instead, Cleveland police officers took her life. Anyia Parker, a Black trans woman was gunned down in East Hollywood. This brutal attack was caught on camera, yet her murder, like so many murders of Black trans women, have gone unanswered. This country must abandon the lie that the deep psychological wounds of slavery, racism and structural

- The infant mortality rate for Black mothers is more than double that of White mothers, due to factors like poverty, lack of access to health care, and the physiological effects of stress caused by living under structural oppression.

- Twenty-two states have passed new voter restrictions since 2010, disenfranchising as many as 34 million Americans, most of them Black.
- In cities across the country, profit-driven policies fuel displacement and gentrification, leading to the destruction of entire Black communities.
- Blacks and Latinos are about 31 percent of the US population, but 60 percent of the prison population.
- In our country 1 in 3 black men will be incarcerated in his lifetime, and Black women are the fastest growing prison population.
- The life expectancy of a Black trans woman is 35 years. The average income of a Black trans person is less than 10K. Trans people are denied jobs, housing and healthcare just for living in their truths.
- It is legal in many jurisdictions to fire LBGT people from employment and deny them access to healthcare and housing.
- Since 1976, the United States has executed thirteen times more black defendants with white victims than white defendants with black victims.
- Black US political prisoners have collectively served over 800 years in prison and have consistently been denied parole despite good behavior and time served.
- Increasingly, students in white areas are nourished and taught while Black children are criminalized and judged.
- Black neighborhoods lack access to affordable healthy food resulting in disproportionate levels of obesity and other chronic illnesses.

Our schools are designed to funnel our children into prisons. Our police departments have declared war against our community. Black people are

exploited, caged, and killed to profit both the state and big business. This is a true State of Emergency. There is no place for apathy in this crisis. The US government has consistently violated the inalienable rights our humanity affords.

- We say no more.
- We demand an end to all forms of discrimination and the full recognition of our human rights.
- We demand an immediate end to police brutality and the murder of Black people and all oppressed people.
- We demand full, living wage employment for our people.
- We demand decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings and an end to gentrification.
- We demand an end to the school to prison pipeline and quality education for all.
- We demand freedom from mass incarceration and an end to the prison-industrial complex.
- We demand a racial justice agenda from the White House that is inclusive of our shared fate as Black men, women, trans and gender-nonconforming people. Not My Brother's Keeper, but Our Children's Keeper.
- We demand access to affordable healthy food for our neighborhoods.
- We demand an aggressive attack against all laws, policies, and entities that disenfranchise any community from expressing themselves at the ballot.
- We demand a public education system that teaches the rich history of Black people and celebrates the contributions we have made to this country and the world.
- We demand the release of all US political prisoners.
- We demand an end to the military-industrial complex that incentivizes private corporations to profit off of the death and destruction of Black and Brown communities across the globe.

This country owes Black citizens nothing less than full recognition of our human rights. The White House's current racial justice initiative, My Brother's Keeper, ignores too many members of our communities. It does not address the inhumane conditions we collectively experience living in a white supremacist system. The issues facing Black women, immigrants, trans and queer people must be included and we demand a full expansion of My Brother's Keeper to do so.

We demand the same inclusion from our movement.

None of us are free until all of us are free. Our collective efforts have exposed the ugly American traditions of patriarchy, classism, racism, and militarism. These combined have bred a violent culture rife with transphobia, and other forms of illogical hatred.

This corrupt democracy was built on Indigenous genocide and chattel slavery. And continues to thrive on the brutal exploitation of people of color. We recognize that not even a Black President will pronounce our truths. We must continue the task of making America uncomfortable about institutional racism. Together, we will re-imagine what is possible and build a system that is designed for Blackness to thrive.

We fight in the name of Aiyana Stanley-Jones, killed by Detroit Police at the age of 7 years old, who never got to graduate from elementary school. We fight in the name of Mike Brown, who was killed by officer Darren Wilson, weeks before starting college. We fight in the name of Islan Nettles, a 21 year old Black trans woman who was pummeled to death outside a NYC police station in Harlem. We fight in the name of Tarika Wilson, who was killed by an Ohio police officer while holding one of her babies, and will never get to embrace any of her six children again.

2015 is the year of resistance. We the People, committed to the declaration that Black lives matter, will fight to end the structural oppression that prevents so many from realizing their dreams. We cannot, and will not stop until America recognizes the value of Black life.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Peacekeepers

Guest article by Cassandra Mudgway, PhD Student at University of Canterbury (UC). Vice President of the UC's Feminist Society (UC FEMSOC). Twitter: @legallyfeminist

Peacekeepers: Perpetrators

Casual observation of media news stories would suggest that United Nations Peacekeeping operations have been at the centre of so-called “sex scandals” off-and-on for the last 15 years. The truth is far more insidious. Many allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN peacekeepers are reported each year. Incidences of sexual abuse (such as rape, sexual violence, exchange of sex for aid or food, and paedophilia) have been reported from every area in which the UN operates (for example, Cambodia, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Somalia, and South Sudan).¹ The latest series of allegations that hit the news included a rape of a 12 year old girl in the Central African Republic by a member of a UN military contingent (August 2015).²

Victims of sexual exploitation and abuse are overwhelmingly women and children.

Accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse is woeful. Despite the UN’s “zero-tolerance” policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, the organisation does not have the capacity to initiate criminal investigations or enforce prosecution. In the case of substantiated reports, the most the UN can do is send the individual perpetrator back to their home country (repatriate). It is up to the troop-contributing country to investigate and prosecute their nationals. However, states are in some cases unwilling or unable to exercise jurisdiction, leading to, impunity.

A lack of accountability means a lack of justice for victims and their communities

discredits the UN’s position as a human rights “promoter”.

As a response to the first wave of sexual abuse allegations in the early 2000s, a UN official report³ recommended various reforms to the structure of peacekeeping. Such reforms included putting in place curfews and “out of bounds” areas (to minimise unnecessary contact with local women and girls). In terms of accountability, UN agreements with troop-contributing states attempted to “clarify” obligations, including formal “assurances” that states will exercise their criminal jurisdiction when they receive reports of sexual exploitation involving their nationals.

Ten years post-reforms, the situation seemingly remains the same.

An expert report leaked by AIDS-Free World⁴ earlier this year revealed on-going impunity. Despite increased training and awareness-raising, UN personnel claim ambiguity about what conduct constitutes “sexual exploitation” (see more below). Additionally, local communities either do not know about the “zero-tolerance” policy or are unsure about how to report incidences of suspected abuse. This has resulted in mass underreporting of sexual exploitation and abuse.

More disturbing, the report indicated a continued culture of sexual exploitation within UN peacekeeping operations.

Sexual Exploitation

Under the UN’s “zero-tolerance” policy sexual exploitation includes the following conduct: survival-sex type relationships (where sex is exchanged for assistance which is already owed, sometimes this is as small as \$1 or a biscuit) and soliciting sex from adult prostitutes. “Sexual exploitation” is about the abuse of unequal power dynamics between peacekeepers (particularly

military contingent members) and the local population, who are often dependent on aid/assistance.

However, the official definition used by the UN is broad enough to include consensual sexual relationships:⁵

“actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, deferential power or trust for sexual purposes including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.”

This, and the inclusion of prostitution, arguably removes agency from women who engage in such relationships. Sex is labelled the problem rather than the context in which it occurs.

Context: poverty

UN peacekeepers are often deployed to areas which are experiencing circumstances of conflict, post-conflict or post-disaster. Women and children are disproportionately affected within these contexts and are often displaced (relocated to refugee camps, for example) and become extremely poor. Suddenly, the presence of peacekeepers and humanitarian aid workers offers hope for those who are suffering and the differential power in this relationship becomes obvious. Instead of tackling the issue of poverty as a driving force of sexual exploitation, the UN has opted for a prohibition of sex.

Context: harmful masculinities

The countries which contribute the most troops to peacekeeping come from social and cultural backgrounds which are similar to host countries in relation to discrimination against women. Moreover, sexual objectification of women and gendered violence are magnified within harmful masculinities



associated with militaries. An attitude of “boys will be boys” compounds any pre-existing gender and racial hierarchy within the local community. The result is a culture of sexual exploitation and an unwillingness to enforce standards.

For the UN to move forward, arguably reforms of accountability mechanisms and victim assistance must also take into consideration the wider context of harmful masculinities and gendered violence.

Critical mass: movement for change?

After the damning reports⁶ released this year, the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, announced an external independent review⁷ into the allegations

of sexual abuse in the Central African Republic and the UN’s response mechanisms (again, of course a similar report was issued in 2005). Civil society and non-governmental organisations (such as AIDS-Free World) have rallied this year to push the UN to reconsider the exclusive authority of troop-contributing countries to prosecute.⁸

In August, Ban Ki-moon removed General Babacar Gaye as head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic as a demonstration of a robust response to these allegations, and one of the more surprising moves to come out of the Secretariat in recent years.⁹ However, the world has to wait and see whether individual perpetrators are also investigated and punished.

It remains to be seen whether this is the beginning of a serious challenge to the culture of sexual exploitation within the ranks of peacekeeping or whether the upcoming reports and reforms will once again fall to the lowest common denominator.

It will be up to the international community to continue to pressure the United Nations and troop-contributing countries for better accountability and demand an end to impunity.

NB: Cassandra will be speaking about her PhD research in this area at the UC FemSoc “Intersectional Feminist Day Conference” (Saturday September 12, Business and Law Building, University of Canterbury). Her PhD will be published in 2016.

1 See for example General Assembly, *Investigation into sexual exploitation of refugees by aid workers in West Africa* GA A/57/465 (2002); Human Rights Watch *The Power These Men Have Over Us: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia* (September 2014); M Pfanz “Six-year-olds Sexually Abused by UN Peacekeepers” *The Daily Telegraph* (26 May 2008) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news>; UNHCR and Save The Children-UK *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone* (February 2002).

2 Amnesty International “CAR: UN Troops implicated in rape of girl and indiscriminate killings must be investigated” (news release, 11 August 2015).

3 Secretary-General *A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* GA A/59/710 (2005), prepared by Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-Hussein.

4 Dr T Awori, Dr C Lutz and General P J Thapa *Final Report: Expert Mission to Evaluate Risks to SEA Prevention Efforts in MINUSTAH, UNMIL, MONUSCO, and UNMISS* (2013) leaked by AIDS-Free World March 2015 see AIDS-Free World *Open Letter to Ambassadors of All United Nations Member States* (16 March 2015) <www.aidsfreeworld.org>.

5 Definition from the United Nations Secretary-General’s Bulletin *Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* SG B ST/SGB/2003/13 (2003).

6 Above n 4; Office of Internal Oversight Services *Evaluation Report: Evaluation of the Enforcement and Remedial Assistance Efforts for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by the United Nations and Related Personnel in Peacekeeping Operations* (May 2015).

7 G Russell “EXCLUSIVE: UN sex abuse scandal: Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon announces new inquiry” *Fox News* (4 June 2015) <http://www.foxnews.com>.

8 For more information about the campaign (#CodeBlue) check out AIDS-Free World’s website: www.codebluecampaign.com.

9 C Anna “Ban Fires UN Peacekeeping Chief in Central African Republic” *abc News* (August 2015) www.abcnews.go.com.

China's stock market crash:

Heading for a great leap backwards?

In 20 years, China has gone from the most equal country in Asia in terms of income distribution to the least equal country. While the transformation has proven profitable for a minority, tens of thousands of workers have taken strike action against paltry wages and conditions.

This restructuring has also meant increased vulnerability to fluctuations in the stock market.

In a piece originally published by Green Left Weekly (Australia), John Rainford examines the context of the recent stock market crash in China.

Australia managed its way through the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in better shape than most countries, mostly due to two factors.

The first was \$83 billion in Australian government stimulus spending, the third largest in the world as a percentage of GDP, behind the US and South Korea.

The second was resilient demand for iron ore and coal exports to China which came from an initial US\$4 trillion in Chinese stimulus spending, organised through the country's banks.

This Keynesian counter-cyclical deficit spending led to China also being relatively

unaffected by the GFC from its onset in 2008. But much of the cheap debt available in China was funnelled into property and share market speculation. This created a dual bubble that was always going to burst at some point.

In the year from June 2014, the Chinese stock market value rose by 100%. But in just three weeks from late June, the stock market lost a quarter of this value, wiping out \$2.4 trillion of investors' money and affecting financial markets around the globe.

China's rise

China's rise to a leading world economic power has been meteoric. It can be dated from 1978 when the Chinese Communist Party leadership under Deng Xiaoping (referred to by Mao Zedong as a secret "capitalist roader" during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76) announced a program of economic reform. This involved "four modernisations" in agriculture, industry, education, and science and defence.

These were designed to introduce market forces to the Chinese economy.

Fortunately for China's leader's ambition, the turn to neoliberalism in the rich countries from the 1980s opened up the opportunity for China to become incorporated into the global

market. This allowed China to develop a peculiar form of market economy that was variously controlled or manipulated by a state still claiming to be socialist. "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" remains the official party line.

What it has delivered so far is a mixed bag of environmental degradation, social inequality, state suppression, and rampant corruption. This has come alongside spectacular economic growth, rising living standards for a significant part of the population and a burgeoning middle class who have reportedly pumped more than 10% of their new-found wealth into the Chinese stock market.

China's largely state-owned banking system, which has financed the boom, grew rapidly after the mid-1980s. In less than a decade, the number of branches of state banks went from 60,000 to 144,000, with the number of employees increasing from 974 thousand to 1.9 million. In this period, their deposits increased from 427.3 billion yuan to 2.3 trillion yuan, while total loans went from 590.5 billion yuan to 2.6 trillion yuan.

Property bubble

This led to a property bubble forcing the Chinese government to spend almost as much to clean up bad loans as the US government did to bail out the savings and

loans finance sector in 1987 (\$124 billion).

When, in 2003, the Chinese government transferred \$45 billion in foreign exchange reserves to two large state banks, it was the third largest bailout of the banking system in less than six years.

The Chinese government has responded to the latest stock market rout by organising market brokerages to invest in a blue-chip exchange-traded fund. This will buy shares to stem share price losses. It has also suspended any new stock market listings, raised quotas for foreigners to buy stocks, and the central bank will provide funds to encourage investors to borrow to buy shares. This unorthodox approach appears to be analogous to throwing petrol on a fire.

The vastly overvalued stock market is a result of China trying to manage a transition from the reliance on exports and infrastructure development that has sustained its phenomenal growth rates, to raising domestic consumption as a driver of growth.

The country responded to the GFC by ramping up infrastructure spending. It raised its contribution to GDP growth from about 25% in the 1990s to 90% in 2009, the year it began the largest infrastructure stimulus spending in history. In the period from 2008-13, new credit available across the economy

increased by more than \$20 trillion, an amount larger than the size of the entire US commercial banking sector.

China is also shifting from the foreign direct investment (FDI) that it relied on to sustain its rapid economic growth, to outbound direct investment (ODI). This grew at an average 19% each year between 2009-14. In 2014, ODI was \$116 billion, almost on a par with FDI of \$120 billion.

The envious view of China's economy held by many countries takes on a different hue when seen from the perspective of a large number of Chinese citizens. In 20 years, it has gone from the most equal country in Asia in terms of income distribution to the least equal country. According to some reports, a third of its people live on less than \$2 a day.

A significant amount of the capital accumulated by companies operating in China has come from not just low-paid labour but from unpaid labour.

Labour surplus

This has led to another major problem that China has to contend with — huge labour surpluses that it must either absorb or be ready to repress. This will be much more difficult in a slowing economy, and the extent of the problem can be gauged by the official figures

which recorded more than 184,000 occurrences of mass unrest in 2013.

The Maoist notion of the masses being made up of “workers, the peasantry, the intelligentsia and the national bourgeoisie whose interests are harmonious with each other and the state” is certainly not the case now, if it ever was.

China has long been funding US debt so the US can continue to consume China's surplus production. Should the Chinese economy fall into recession, or even enter a long period of stagnation like Japan, the fragile, jobless and anaemic recovery from the GFC in the rich world would come to a halt.

The US would likely be the first country affected as it is the largest destination for Chinese investment. As to how Australia might fare: leaving aside the obvious further contraction of iron ore and coal exports, last year China became the biggest foreign investor in Australia, with \$64.5 billion coming into the country in 2014.

The Abbott government will be hoping that the Chinese Communist Party gets its response right.

Blame Capitalists, Not “Foreigners”:

The need for internationalism in Aotearoa / New Zealand

By Ian Anderson and Thomas Roud
(Fightback Aotearoa / New Zealand).

Recent weeks in Aotearoa / New Zealand have seen further housing crisis controversy, triggered by Labour housing spokesman Phil Twyford's comments about people with “Chinese surnames” buying houses. Unfortunately many on the left have come to Twyford's defence, for example John Minto in a recent *Daily Blog* article:

“What we need is an outright ban on foreigners owning land or houses in New Zealand, a tough capital gains tax to drive local speculators and investors out of the housing market and a massive state house building programme to meet the housing quality and affordability crisis where it's having its most devastating impact.”

Some strong progressive policies here are sullied by the racism of the opening line. The problem with Minto's term “foreigners,” like Twyford's “Chinese surnames,” is that they don't distinguish between international investors and migrants.

Around 40% of homes are owned by non-occupants, and “foreign” buyers make up less than a quarter of that number (while “Chinese surnames” are a very poor indicator, former Labour leader David Shearer's estimate of 7-10% is higher than most official estimates). House prices and rents have skyrocketed, while real wages continue a thirty-year decline. Local profiteers are no better than “foreign” profiteers; all forms of speculation, price-gouging, and private ownership must be restricted (see *Housing: Foreign Ownership is not the Problem*, Ian Anderson, Fightback; *Chinese Are Not to Blame, A New Zealand Housing Crisis*, Joshua O'Sullivan, ISO).

Restricting only “foreigners” is not only a half-measure, it's scapegoating a minority for economic problems, a truly dangerous path.

Some on the left have highlighted National's history of racism to discredit accusations levelled at Labour. However, Labour has its own racist history – including both an active role in oppressing tangata whenua, and in scapegoating migrants. Last time they were in government, Labour deprived Maori of customary title to the foreshore and seabed, and oversaw the Urewera Raids of October 15th 2007. On the migration front, Labour oversaw the unjust detention of Ahmed Zaoui, among others. As far back as the 1920s, Labour campaigned for a “White New Zealand” policy.

National's racist history does not excuse Labour's racist history. Drivers behind racism in Aotearoa / New Zealand are deeper than any one party.

Aotearoa colonised by New Zealand

Capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa through colonisation, through the alienation of Maori land and labour. Colonisers imported a legal, political and economic infrastructure under the name “New Zealand.” Despite contemporary attempts at nation-building through shedding the colonial flag, we still live with the legacy of that socio-economic origin.

Some say Aotearoa/NZ is facing neo-colonisation under the TPPA. We contend that Aotearoa continues to be colonised by New Zealand. Whereas Aotearoa is an indigenous Pacific nation, New Zealand is part of the imperialist Anglosphere – joining the US, the UK, and Australia in militarily and economically dominating poorer and browner nations.

Tangata whenua continue to fare the worst in all social stats. Treaty claims have cost only \$0.9 billion, with much of this going to undemocratic iwi corporations rather than redistribution of land and resources, compared to a \$1.6 billion bailout for South Canterbury Finance.

Solidarity with migrant workers

While oppression of tangata whenua is the original sin of New Zealand capitalism, scapegoating of Asian and Pacific migrants has also helped to divide the working-class. As comedian Raybon Kan argued in a recent piece for the *NZ Herald*:

Historically, Chinese have never been welcome. From the gold miners and railway workers who weren't allowed to bring women, to the Poll Tax, we've always been singled out for worse treatment.

This is a divide-and-conquer strategy; capitalists draw the colour line to justify offering worse conditions, and white workers in turn accept the Faustian pact. The only effective way to combat this strategy is to stand with migrant workers.

This may sound like idealist rhetoric. To give a concrete example, in February 2007 management at bus company Go Wellington introduced new conditions to cut down drivers' access to overtime. When a number of drivers quit over these changes, the company shopped around for cheaper labour in Fiji, expecting applicants to sign scab contracts. However, the migrant workers got wise and the majority signed up to the Tramways Union. When the company locked bus drivers out a year later, the majority were union, and public pressure resulted in a swift victory. As always, we're stronger together.

Just as Pakeha workers must support Maori sovereignty for any chance of justice in this country, so locals must stand with migrant workers. In the case of housing, this requires distinguishing between international investors and economic migrants.

International investors

The problem with “foreign” capitalists is that they’re capitalists. The Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), a major effort at entrenching international inequality, is an attack on workers. Currently under the TPPA, French conglomerate Veolia is attempting to sue the Egyptian government over loss of revenue from raising its minimum wage (Veolia also operates Auckland’s rail network).

Meanwhile, New Zealand and Australia are negotiating a less prominent trade agreement, the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus). Pacific trade unions and NGOs support delaying PACER Plus. In the words of Solomon Islands opposition leader Manasseh Sogavare:

“As far as Solomon Islands is concerned, the arrangement would amount to opening up one-way traffic of trade benefits from here to Australia and New Zealand, which in any case is already in favour of these countries without the PACER Plus arrangement.”

Financialisation over the last 30 years has benefited local capitalists – prominently merchant bankers Sir Michael Fay and David Richwhite (speaking of ethnic surnames), who gained billions from the sale of telecommunications and rail infrastructure. National and Labour’s rich friends, both local and international, benefit from asset-stripping.

We oppose all privatisation, all commercialisation, all profiteering. Focus on “foreigners” is a diversion. During the asset sales campaign, Fightback raised the slogan “Aotearoa is not for sale, to local or “foreign” capitalists.”

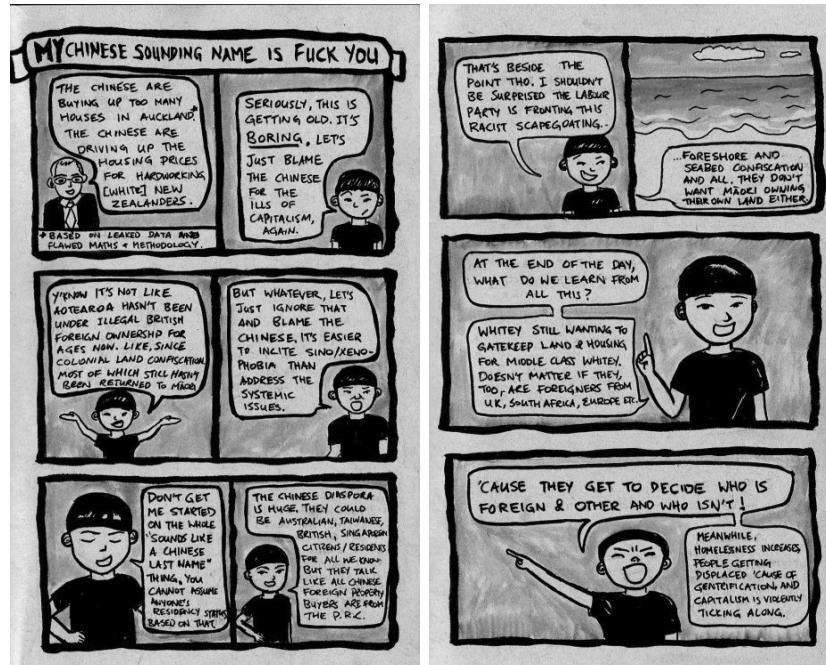
Sovereignty and internationalism

As Syriza’s Pyrrhic victory in Greece this year demonstrates, even if leftists win any kind of power at a national level, we will still face the combined weight of international capital. Both sides of the class war are international. Without working-class power on the ground, in communities and workplaces, control of a nation easily becomes co-opted into management of the status quo.

Moreover, in a globalised economy the need for struggles to be regional, rather than nationally isolated, is even greater.

During the great labour struggles of “Aotearoa/New Zealand – the 1951 waterfront lockout, the 1913 and 1890 general strikes –” Australian maritime unions were some of the key supporters of local militants, going to jail for their brothers and sisters across the Pacific. When Maori sovereignty activists re-occupied Bastion Point, Communist Party militants ensured union support. This history of solidarity, rather than the history of Yellow Peril scares, must be our inspiration.

Fightback stands for open borders, full rights for migrant workers, and self-determination for all Pacific nations.



Cartoon: *My Chinese-Sounding Name is Fuck You*
Reprinted from everythingisnothingbyitself.tumblr.com

Solidarity and coordination throughout key regions lays the foundation for a sustained break from the status quo. While still facing many difficulties, relationships between Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia hint towards pan-regional approaches; sharing uneven resources like oil and doctors, and countering pressure from US imperialism.

We demand sovereignty, but the sovereignty of organised workers and communities; “rangatiratanga for the poor, powerless and dispossessed,” in MANA’s words. In the 2011 and 2014 General Elections, MANA stood for an expansion of state housing, recognition of Maori claims, opposition to imperialist agreements with the US, and rights for migrants. Scapegoating of “foreigners” weakens this programme and prospects for liberation.

Why you should get involved in Fightback

10 Point Programme

1. Constitutional transformation based on Tino Rangatiratanga, Mana Motuhake and workers power. Tangata whenua and community co-ops to operate as kaitiaki over public resources.
2. Secure jobs for all who are ready to work, with a living wage and a shorter working week.
3. The benefit system to be replaced with a universal basic income.
4. Full rights for migrant workers.
5. Opposition to all imperialist intervention and alliances, including New Zealand state's participation in military occupations and the Five Eyes agreement.
6. No revolution without women's liberation. Full funding for sexual violence prevention and survivor support, free access to all reproductive technologies. For socialist-feminist solutions to the marginalisation of all gender minorities, within the movement and in society.
7. For an ecosocialist solution to climate change. End fossil fuel extraction, expand green technology and public transport.
8. For freedom of technology and information. Expansion of affordable broadband internet to the whole country. An end to Government spying on our own citizens and on others. End corporate copyright policies in favour of creative commons centred on producers and users.
9. Abolish prisons, replace with restorative justice and rehabilitation.
10. Free health-care and education at every level, run by those directly affected. In healthcare; remove inequities in accident compensation, move towards health system based on informed consent, opposition to "top-down" efforts to change working people's behaviour. In education; full public funding for all forms of education and research, enshrining education in te tiriti and te reo.

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